

Student: James Cleeland

ID: 526328

Summary Presentation

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The first book on cinema that I read many years ago, was Jack Sargeant's '*Deathtripping: The Cinema of Transgression*' (Sargeant, 2008). At the time, it opened me up to an intellectual way of reading cinema. Sargeant, by situating the movies that he was writing about; placing them into a historical framework and wider sociological understanding, gave my punkish work an overview of how it could fit also into a bigger picture. It was the first book on film theory that gave substance to how sub-cultures acting out of non-conformity, can disrupt, challenge, find new philosophies and meaning. It is a book that I continue to read.

In Duncan Reekie's PhD thesis 'Not Art: An Action and History of British Underground Cinema' he writes about:

"how the Avant-Garde developed from the conviction that art should have a moral and social function in founding a new utopian society, however this conviction must be understood as an opposition to both the feudal order and to the bourgeois economy."  
(Reekie, p.58)

This resonates whole heartedly and reflects in how I presently choose to distribute work. Which is in opposition to a bourgeois economy, being that I release and distribute my work using various Creative Commons licenses and for no economical gain.

Reekie's work begins to inform my understanding from a historical perspective on underground cinema and alternative screening spaces. Reekie belongs to a volunteer collective of filmmakers that screen anything shorter than 20 minutes. Boundaries of taste, marginality and filmmaking ability are said and encouraged to be dissolved, leaving for a more open environment for cinema to flourish. Since their beginning in 1991, they have promoted screening events in disused buildings, pubs and cafes. During the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown in England, the group held a few online screening events. These were very well organised and gave an alternative space via Zoom for people showing work to informally chat about their work if they so wished. I had a couple of my short works screened.

This connection, whereby writing feeds directly and indirectly into what it is I am making, started in the late 1990s with '*Virtual Futures*' edited by Joan Broadhurst Dixon and Eric Cassidy. Many of the book's essays posit post-humanism, digital culture at the forefront of emerging technologies. At that time I was in communication with John Pozzi, Director of Global Resource Bank. I had a meeting with him in Frankfurt, Germany where I discussed the idea of customers of GRB being able to exchange Eco credits (currency of the GRB) for jpegs. The idea of exchanging a currency for a jpeg online at that time was completely unheard of. Yet today, there are many websites springing up that offer that exact same function. I can now sell online digital art for crypto currencies. One of my recent moving image works is titled '*Electronic Gucci for Video Clothes*' (Cleeland, 2018), and was made as a critique of clothing brands selling items such as virtual sneakers and clothes to wear in online environments. After a whole year of shops and galleries being shut due to the Covid-19 pandemic, retailers and galleries have been forced to be more active online in maintaining visibility. Selling high priced art previously belonged in physical galleries and

auction houses. In many ways the Covid-19 pandemic has temporarily disrupted this hierarchy. Non-fungible tokens (NFTs) have allowed emerging artists to sell digital artefacts, some at headline prices. Elon Musk's partner Grimes sold a collection of CGI videos and digital images for \$5.8 million. I am interested in the correlation between NFTs and Creative Commons in how they continue to upset a more centralised vision of the world.

Through the readings in '*Virtual Futures*' I am introduced to ethical arguments that position the digital body often in opposition to Government borders and laws. I have been pondering where my work fits in relation to a post-anthropocentric position. Both Deleuze and Guattari make references to Spinoza's central concept about the world and humans being dualistic entities. Creative Commons allows for and envelops a monistic world view that is holistic at heart – a new type of body/mind interrelation, where the digital realm and our understanding of that is linked to a biological framework. Digital matter is also living matter!

Gene Youngblood's seminal work '*Expanded Cinema*' (Youngblood, 1970) introduced video art as becoming the environment, rather than being just part of the environment. It tells of an alternative historical narrative, not only of what Expanded Cinema was back then, but also what it was envisioning 30 plus years ago, of what we would be seeing today. The book weaved together a philosophy of art to explain the emerging technologies of that time. Recently, I had one of my short movies screened at a virtual reality event in Brazil. Attendees were able to login and explore artist created environments. The event also broadcast these interactions along with submitted film works on large outside screens. The work was originally made during the Covid-19 lockdown in England, for the Japanese psychedelic rock band '*Acid Mother's Temple*'. For me, Gene Youngblood's

visionary book, forecast events such as the virtual reality event in Brazil. In the 1970s he understood the man/computer symbiosis – the technological revolution that was happening then and is now still happening. In Gene Youngblood's own words: "The computer is the arbiter of radical evolution: it changes the meaning of life. It makes us children. We must learn how to live all over again." (Youngblood, p.180).

In my contextual study essay I drew an analogy between Gene Youngblood's '*Radical Utopian*' and of a radical will that can be found in Melville's book-character '*Bartleby, the Scrivener*'. The radicalness of Bartleby's *will*, for me, seems rather similar to Gene Youngblood's idea of a '*Radical Utopian*'. In that, in order for there to be a better world the end user cannot be just a passive user, a recipient of the dominator. The end user must be active and part of the solution. In Melville's story, Bartleby can be viewed as an agitator. His action is conscious, it disrupts the flow and goes against the grain. His boss never finds a real solution to Bartleby's action of preferring not to. However, it could be argued that Bartleby opens his boss up to looking at the world differently.

Recently, the well-established German artist Hito Steyerl had an exhibition at the Pompidou Center in Paris. In a conversation with Jason Farago, writing for *The New York Times*, Hito takes a snobbish attitude to what she calls a glut of content on the internet (Farago, 2021). I would simply say there is a lot of stuff on the internet and there is a whole lot of people looking. A TikTok video can quite easily attract more views in a day than The Pompidou Center gets visitors in a week. I think only an artist that is privileged, with access to exhibiting in high end galleries, would frame the Internet using words such as 'glut'. To use the word 'glut' in relation to content shows a lack of understanding to how other individuals access and view the Internet. Linguistically the word is flimsy, far too easy a word to tout as a critique.

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